

TEES VALLEY

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund *Guidance*



Funded by
UK Government

Tees Valley – Celebrate the Great Outdoors

Tees Valley is one remarkable region, made up of five unique boroughs and home to a landscape that is breath-taking and dramatic. It is where the beauty of the countryside meets the serenity of the coast, all united by the mighty river Tees that snakes through our towns.

There is plenty to see, do and experience, with adrenaline-fuelled water sports and some of the UK's best beaches for surfing - perfect for adventure seekers. There is wonderful woodland, walking routes such as the Teesdale Way and iconic natural wonders like the Guisborough Hills to explore too.

Our towns are vibrant and full of action – and we want the same excitement to spread to our unparalleled beauty spots so they can come alive with the spirit of Tees Valley and show all they have to offer.



Challenge Fund Objective

To establish new or scale-up existing festivals and/or events that celebrate and showcase Tees Valley's natural assets, encouraging audiences and participants to actively engage with their surroundings. These festivals and events should have potential for annual delivery and be distinctly 'Tees Valley', contributing to Tees Valley's year-round visitor offer: increasing visitors, spend & overnight stays, attracting new audiences, as well as offering Tees Valley residents with new experiences on their doorstep.

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund is designed to provide seed funding to establish regular or annual festivals or events to be delivered in Tees Valley and become sustainable (without TVCA investment) beyond 2026.

What does this mean?

- We want to invest in festivals / events that represent the Tees Valley – something audiences and participants can only get here. Some elements could be delivered elsewhere but there must be something about this festival / event as a whole that is distinctly Tees Valley.
- The Great Outdoors must be at the heart of the festival / event. It doesn't have to be sporting activity, but it must celebrate the outdoors.
- The festival / event must be accessible. There should be opportunities for everybody to engage with the festival / event in some way. That could be through fringe activities and programmes, providing opportunities for people to try a particular sport or including events for disabled participants.
- As well as encouraging local audiences to engage and participate, festivals / events should have the potential to reach new audiences from outside Tees Valley. Through the festivals / events, we want to attract visitors who may not have considered visiting Tees Valley and encourage them to make return visits. We'd like to complement the existing calendar of festivals and events in Tees Valley. Therefore, we'd like some of the projects we invest in through The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund to take place during the quieter months. This will also support local businesses during their quiet times.
- We'd love people to stay in Tees Valley and stay for longer. The festival / event should give visitors a reason to stay and spend money in the region.

TVCA will invest in up to four exciting festival or event products that will achieve the programme objectives. We will take a balanced approach to investment in festivals / events, taking into consideration geographical spread of the festivals and type of activity.

TVCA wants to work with you, by playing a strategic role to add value to your festival /event. Festivals / events should focus on or around the following:

- Adventure
- Natural Environment
- Walking
- Water

Tees Valley has a diverse range of landscapes, natural assets, and outdoor facilities that could provide a unique backdrop for hosting festivals and events. We're looking for applications which make the most of these natural assets. Some of the locations we've identified which you may wish to consider for your application include, but are not limited to;

DARLINGTON	HARTLEPOOL	MIDDLESBROUGH	REDCAR & CLEVELAND	STOCKTON
South Park	Hartlepool Marina & Highlight	Middlesbrough Dockside	East Cleveland & Saltburn	Tees Barrage & International White Water Centre
	Seaton Carew	Stewart Park & Middlesbrough Sports Village	Guisborough & Guisborough Forest & Walkway	Yarm Wharf

Together with our Local Authority partners, we can support you to find suitable locations to match your idea.

Who is it for and who can apply?

Festival, event and activity provider businesses / organisations or consortia of businesses/organisations.

- Tees Valley based festival/event businesses.
- Nationally based festival/event businesses (who must commit to working with local partners to ensure the event is rooted in the Tees Valley. TVCA can provide support in finding local partners).
- Local Authorities
- Consortia can include individuals and related supply chain businesses.

The lead organisation must:

- Have a Business Bank account.
- Have a demonstrable track record, with at least 24 months trading and delivering events.

If you have received TVCA funding in the past, you are still eligible to apply.

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund is part of TVCA's Growth Programme for the Creative and Visitor Economies.

[Click Here](#)

To read more about the objectives of the programme and TVCA

Levels of Investment and Delivery Stages

Total investment pot: £400,000

TVCA will invest in a maximum of four festival/event products.

We expect to invest around £100,000 for each festival event over the delivery period which will be a maximum of 2 years (from April 2024 to March 2026), depending on when you deliver your festival / event.

TVCA investment should act as a catalyst for the longer-term sustainability of the festival. The continuing festival model must not be dependent on TVCA income beyond the period of this programme.

Delivery stages differ for new and existing festival event products. We anticipate that investment will support the following stages and taper down over the investment period:

For new festival / event products:

- **Stage 1:** If the proposal is for a new, untested idea, applicants must undertake a feasibility / development period before delivering their festival / event. This can include audience demand, site research, partnership development, sponsorship development etc. Subject to the outcome of the feasibility / development plan, TVCA will decide whether to continue to invest in the proposed activity and progress applicants to
- **Stage 2:** Festival delivery.
- **Stage 3:** Festival delivery and legacy planning. *

For existing festival / event products (feasibility not required):

- **Stage 1:** Not required.
- **Stage 2:** Development of existing festival / event product and festival delivery.
- **Stage 3:** Festival delivery and legacy planning.*

* We expect Stage 3 festival delivery to have scaled up in terms of profile, audience & participation, programme and impact. Focus should also be on the sustainability of the event beyond TVCA investment.

Launch Dates

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund launches: **Friday 17 November 2023**

EOIs open from: **Friday 17 November 2023**

EOIs close: **Friday 12 January 2024**

Visioning Workshops: **From Monday 27 November 2023 – Friday 19 January 2024 *excluding 19 December 2023 – 3 January 2024**

Application Process

STAGE 1	Submit an Expression of Interest (EOI)
STAGE 2	If EOI is successful, you will be invited to attend a Visioning Workshop
STAGE 3	Attend Visioning Workshop and develop the event vision and application
STAGE 4	Submit Application

Deadline for applications

Deadline for full applications: 5pm, **Friday 1 March 2024**

Applicants notified of outcome by: **Monday 25 March 2024**

Projects start from: **Monday 1 April 2024**

Project Length

Up to 24 months, subject to when project can start. All projects must complete their delivery by 31st March 2026.

Examples of the types of projects we will support

The festival or event can be a new or existing product. All festival or event products invested in must not be one-off events. The investment is to enable development and sustainability to deliver an annual event that continues to be delivered beyond TVCA investment period.

TVCA is looking to invest in festivals and events that respond to the challenge fund objective (see page 1) and are distinctly Tees Valley, using our landscape as a focal point to attract visitors.

Therefore, TVCA will invest in festival/event products with the following focuses only – Natural Environment, Adventure, Walking and Water.

Examples / activities could include:

- Festival of/on water e.g. paddleboarding, beach-based activities
- Sporting event on water kayaking, canoeing, surfing etc
- Woodland/forest-based festival
- A walking festival
- VR/AR Trail or Geocaching festival
- Mixed activity/adventure/sporting event such as a triathlon
- Wellbeing retreat festival
- Niche nature activities – e.g., birdwatching festival

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund will not support festival / events focused on cycling unless cycling is a minor part of wider activities. An approach to cycling events / products is being developed separately with regional and national partners. We do not envisage supporting football, tennis, rugby or any other lawn or pitched based sports.

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund Criteria

All festival / event products supported via this challenge fund should respond to the Destination Management Plan investment criteria:

- Generate longer-staying visitors to contribute to growth ambitions.
- Deliver visitors at quieter times of the year.
- Strengthen sustainability credentials and reduce carbon emissions.
- Create jobs, employ and upskill the local workforce.
- Increase local visitor spend – day and staying.
- Benefit local communities.
- Benefit existing local business – supply chain and by keeping visitors longer.
- Contribute to a vibrant and varied year-round festival and events offer for Tees Valley – diversifying the offer across the calendar year.

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund will invest in festivals and events which respond to and achieve the following outcomes.

- Be regionally distinctive.
- Create changes for the longer term rather than be a 'quick fix'.
- Leverage external funding (TVCA will not be the sole funder. Cash match funding is a requirement.)
- Complement existing festival and events.
- Maximise, promote, and open up new audiences to Tees Valley's natural assets/environment.
- Become staples in the Tees Valley festivals and events calendar - TVCA investment should act as a catalyst for the longer-term sustainability of the festival. The continuing festival model must not be dependent on TVCA income beyond the period of this programme.
- Support development of commercial business models
- Have clear audience development and communications plans in place.
- Audiences, workforce and programming reflect the communities they serve.
- Festival and events are inclusive and accessible - As part of TVCA's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, all participating festivals will be supported to undertake accessibility audits to understand current strengths and barriers to engagement and identify opportunities for improved practice in the future.
- Demonstrate environmental responsibility - As part of TVCA's commitment to achieving Net Zero, we will support all participating festivals to undertake an environmental impact audit in order to

understand current impacts and identify opportunities for reduction in the future.

- Incorporation strong local food and beverage offer.
- Incorporation of a creative programme

We know that a project will not achieve or be relevant to all outcomes listed above. However, projects are more likely to be supported via this programme where they achieve multiple outcomes. TVCA can play an active role in providing support or matching you with delivery partners which may help you achieve some of the outcomes above. These needs can be discussed at the visioning workshop.

Eligibility Criteria

The lead applicant must:

- Have a business bank account which is not a personal bank account.
- Be working within the festival and event sector and have a demonstrable trading record of at least 24 months.

Eligible Expenditure

Investment made through this programme can be used to support the following costs:

- Seed funding for direct festival / event delivery costs (no more than c.40% by Year Two)
- Staff costs - new or expansion (e.g., increased hours, from part time to full time) of existing roles – where roles are dedicated to the project.
- Contribution towards existing staff time to develop and deliver the project. If applicants are utilising existing salaried employees, we would envisage providing a smaller contribution towards these costs – a maximum of 10% of the total project cost.
- Management Fees (if lead applicant is an independent sector business) for lead applicant to manage TVCA financial investment and reporting requirements.
- Feasibility costs
- Consortia development
- Audience and market research
- Partnership development/corporate sponsorship development
- Small capital expenditure to support majority revenue-based project (max 20% of total TVCA request)
- Access costs
- Marketing and communication costs, including documentation of project activities such as photography or filmmaking.
- Research and evaluation, including economic assessment. Please note that TVCA will conduct audience surveying at the event/festivals, and you will be required to work with and supply data to TVCA appointed with external evaluator to contribute to evaluation impact assessment of The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund as a whole. Therefore, we would only fund a small amount of additional evaluation resource – around 1-2% of TVCA's contribution.
- Planning, CRM upgrades or other relationship management systems
- Implementation of recommendations from environmental / accessibility audits
- Consultancy costs

Ineligible Expenditure

- Costs that have already been incurred

Match Funding

The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund is designed to provide seed funding to establish regular festivals or events to be delivered in Tees Valley and become sustainable without TVCA investment beyond 2026. TVCA investment should act as a catalyst for the longer-term sustainability of the festival. The continuing festival model must not be dependent on TVCA income beyond the period of this programme. Therefore, cash match is required for all projects. Where cash match is yet to be secured, you must demonstrate capability to raise cash match. Securing cash match may be a condition of receiving TVCA investment. Projects which leverage external match funding specifically towards the project will carry more weight and score higher in the assessment process.

A reasonable proportion of match funding can be existing salaried roles which are supporting project management, development/fundraising management and financial management where time can be evidenced as a dedicated resource to achieving the effective management and delivery of sustainable impacts and outcomes of the proposed festival or event.

In-Kind Support

You can also include in kind support.

In-kind support could be activities, materials, or services that:

- are needed for the project.
- you would otherwise have to pay for; and
- don't already belong to you.

Examples include the following:

- Materials needed to undertake the project/programme.
- Equipment that you would normally have to hire for a fee.
- Use of a space that you would normally have to hire for a fee (for example, studio, office, meeting room, or exhibition space)
- Specialist support (for example, from a mentor, consultant, business advisor, fundraiser) provided for free or for a reduced fee. This would only be seen as appropriate if the specialist has decided that they want to offer their time as support in kind.

- Marketing and promotional support (for example, website development, printing, digital marketing)
- Filming, photography, documenting and so on
- Reduced rates

We are committed to making sure those who work in the events industry and their supply chain receive proper and fair payment to reflect their professional status, skills, and experience. We therefore discourage the inclusion of freelance / unsalaried professionals' time as 'in-kind' match.

Programme Management and Expectations

TVCA wants to work with you to develop your festival and play an active role in supporting you. We will work to extend the impacts of our investment and to add value to the work of our partners by making connections with the wider resource of TVCA. We will work with you to ensure connectivity with the Marketing & Communications, Education, Employment & Skills, and Business Solutions teams and ask that you commit to providing information, copy and images to facilitate promotion of the project as necessary.

We will require successful applicants to develop a Communications & Marketing Plan outlining the objectives, key messages, tactics and KPIs you intend to use to market the project, including social media, digital marketing, and publicity. Ideally, this should include key dates and project milestones. Our Marketing & Communications team will support you with this and work with you to maximise opportunities for raising the profile of your festivals and events.

You will need to commit to working with and providing information and data to our external evaluators, who are conducting a longitudinal study on the effect and impact of TVCA investment on the cultural industries sector.

A Creative Place Development Officer will be identified as your main contact. They will work to support you throughout your programme delivery, and you will need to provide them with regular updates on progress of your project / programme commensurate with size and scale of the project / programme.

Subsidy Control

The UK subsidy control regime began on 4 January 2023. It enables public authorities, including devolved administrations and local authorities, to give subsidies that are tailored to their local needs, and that drive economic growth while minimising distortion to UK competition and protecting our international obligations. Applicants invited to full application stage will be asked to confirm how much public funding the business or organisation has received in the last 3 financial years which has been classified as 'De-Minimus' under the former State Aid regime or Minimal Financial Assistance or Services of public economic interest under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Subject to the amount stated, successful applicants may be required to complete a Minimal Financial Assistance Notification or provide an independent subsidy control assessment from a legal professional.

For more information on the UK Subsidy Control Regime please go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/subsidy-control-regime>.



Step by Step Application Process

Application Process



STEP 1

Read all the guidance and supporting information to ensure your project is eligible and meets the objectives and priorities of the Great Outdoors Challenge Fund. If you have any questions, please get in touch:

Email: creativeplace@teesvalley-ca.gov.uk



STEP 2

Submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) by **Friday 12 January 2024**. EOIs will assess your eligibility, vision and your ability to meet the objective and outcomes of The Great Outdoors Challenge Fund. We advise submitting your EOI at your earliest convenience so that if you are invited to full application stage, you have more time to prepare your full application.



STEP 3

If your EOI is successful, you will be invited to attend a Visioning Workshop. Workshops will take place between **27 November 2023 – 19 January 2024 *excluding 19 December 2023 – 3 January 2024**



STEP 4

At the Visioning Workshop, the Creative Place team will cover the following with you.

- ask how your project meets TVCA's investment priorities & delivers on the outcomes of the fund,
- if you're intending to work with partners, who your partners are (if known).
- TVCA colleagues may make suggestions on further partnerships/suppliers/ connections that may augment and strengthen your project.



STEP 5

If your vision for the festival / event is demonstrably consistent with TVCA's ambition and approach for the visitor economy, you will be invited to submit a detailed application.

Submit your application by **5pm on Friday 1 March 2024.**



STEP 6

We will ask to you provide the following documents;

- A. Project Budget and Delivery Plan using the template provided.

When completing your project budget, there is guidance and examples on how to complete the Project Budget/Delivery Plan on the template.

- B. Your most recent audited accounts or, if not available, your latest management accounts.
- C. One additional document which supports your application (optional).



STEP 7

All applications received will initially be assessed by the Creative Place team and then recommendations passed to an independent assessment panel. See assessment process below.



STEP 8

All applicants will be notified by the published deadline – **Monday 25 March 2024** – by email on the outcome of their application.

How we assess applications

- Officers who work in TVCA's Creative Place team will read all the applications, score your answers against how well it meets the objectives and outcomes of the programme and make recommendations which are taken to an Independent Panel.
- The Independent Panel reads all the applications & Creative Place team's recommendations. The panel members consider whether they agree or not with the recommendations. They also make sure a diverse range of activity and people are being supported and the activity taking place is spread across the Tees Valley.
- Sometimes the panel may ask that we go back to an applicant for more information to help them make a final decision.
- TVCA may also ask Tees Valley Local Authority partners in Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees if what whether our proposed investments align with their plans.
- Financial Due Diligence: TVCA will undertake financial due diligence checks on successful applicants before making a final decision.

This may include:

- Authenticating the personal identities of persons with significant control and carrying out financial/ fraud risk assessment.
- Carrying out a general risk assessment of the organisation using Experian and Companies House records.
- Carrying out a financial viability assessment of each organisation using their accounts together with Experian and Companies House records.
- Carrying out a reputational risk assessment of each applicant.
- Validating grantees' bank accounts using Experian and/or CreditSafe.

Successful Applications

If I am successful, what happens next?

Please note that if you have previously undergone financial due diligence with TVCA, we may be able to use some of the previous checks as evidence in this process.

- Once these checks are complete TVCA will issue you with an indicative offer letter, which may contain conditions related to delivery of the project that assessors have identified.

- We will then enter into a period of negotiation with grant recipients to agree and finalise outputs, budget details etc. Following this, you will be issued with a Funding Agreement.
- The Funding Agreement will state what we have agreed you will spend the money on, outputs, targets and conditions we have set and how much money you receive and when.
- Money will be paid quarterly in arrears unless you have requested quarterly payments in advance within your application and this has been approved by TVCA Finance Manager (see below for further information).
- TVCA grant funding is, as a rule, issued in arrears, however we are aware that some of the businesses we support operate on a project-by-project basis without significant reserves/cash in the bank. Therefore, without advance funds delivery of the project would be difficult to cashflow.
- If you require advanced quarterly payments, there is a question on the application form for you to enter a short statement detailing your financial position and why you would need an advance to deliver the project. Your request will be sent to the finance department to verify and check and approve or otherwise. You will be required to supply TVCA with a quarterly forecast in advance of releasing each quarter payment and provide actuals on previous quarter delivered.

Monitoring & Evaluation

To trigger each payment stage as outlined in your funding agreement, you must provide the following information and documentation. Frequency and level of detail will be proportionate to the scale and length of the project and detailed in your funding agreement.

- Confirmation of match funding i.e., grant/funding offer letter
- Quarterly report (using TVCA template):
 - Detailing income and expenditure to date (quarterly).
 - Explaining any differences between actual and original figures.
 - Progress against milestones, targets and project outcomes to date.
 - A full transaction list of expenditure in the quarter.
- We will sample approximately 10% of expenditure quarterly. (i.e., we will ask for evidence of some invoices being paid).
- If in receipt of quarterly payments in advance – provide a forecast on the next quarter.
- Final report:

- detailing actual income and expenditure, including use / value of local supply chain.
- narrative explaining any differences between actual and original figures.
- narrative on final outcomes against original targets, including:
 - ☞ evidence of outcomes,
 - ☞ case studies, marketing material, photographs, participant
 - ☞ quotes etc.
 - ☞ Evaluation Report using TVCA Evaluation Toolkit.
 - ☞ Final exit strategy, sustainability or legacy plan.
 - ☞ Successful applications must work with the external evaluator to provide data as requested and be available for interview and/or provide a case study.
- Previous years audited accounts to be provided once available (annually for multiple year projects).

All those who receive TVCA investment must:

- Ensure that all records, including financial records, relating to the Project are accurate and up to date. You must keep these records for at least six years after the Project has finished.
- Give us, or any person nominated by us, access to all records relating to the Project or other projects funded by us upon demand within 14 days, including (but not limited to) accounts and any other financial records, VAT and any other tax records. We can ask for access to these records for up to seven years after the Project has finished.
- Where requested, provide us with clear and accurate accounts that cover the period of the Project. These accounts must follow any relevant legal requirements for accounts, audit or examination of accounts, annual reports or annual returns and must clearly show income and expenditure. We may ask for proof of expenditure.

Support with your application

We encourage you to read all the guidance and supporting information. However, if you have any accessibility needs or further questions not covered in the supporting information, please **email: creativeplace@teesvalley-ca.gov.uk**.

If you are not eligible there may be other forms of support through Tees Valley's business support offer. For more information, **[click here](#)**. We would also recommend signing up to our Business & Invest Newsletter by **[clicking here](#)**, to receive the latest news, networking events and funding opportunities from Tees Valley.



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